



Tom Lantos

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER**

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Lantos Seeks to Expand U.S. Global HIV/AIDS Initiative to Include the Population of India to Avert Disaster There

Washington, DC -- Congressman Tom Lantos (D-CA), the ranking Democrat on the House International Relations Committee and co-sponsor of the 2003 legislation authorizing the current U.S. worldwide effort to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS, has asked Global AIDS Coordinator Randall L. Tobias to expand the program to India, and to give that country a high priority when allocating funds.

"There is no doubt the poorest countries of Africa and the Caribbean need urgent and immediate attention to save their very societies," Lantos said in a letter to Tobias. "However, I also want to stress the absolute need to provide resources to the Indian Government and the Indian people in their battle to prevent a health catastrophe of unprecedented proportion."

Lantos handed a copy of the letter to Indian Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha during a meeting today that covered a range of issues of mutual concern to India and the United States.

Noting that the best available estimates indicate that only one percent of people in India currently have the virus that causes AIDS, Lantos also pointed out that "without a major intervention particularly in education and prevention services, India's prevalence rates will escalate dramatically and could reach 25 million infected people by 2010." He added that "with the current low prevalence rates, an immediate and timely intervention can save the lives of millions and help India avoid the impact this epidemic can have on India's future economic development."

Lantos co-sponsored and championed the bipartisan United States Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act of 2003, which authorized the U.S. government to spend up to \$15 billion over four years to support programs to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS in 14 developing countries. He continues to press the Administration and the Republican leadership in Congress to provide all the funds authorized for this initiative year by year.

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